

Information provided by the Republic of Lithuania concerning the implementation of the UN General Assembly resolutions A/RES/73/148 on “Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment“ and A/RES/73/146 on “Trafficking in women and girls“:

INTENSIFICATION OF EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Measures to address sexual harassment against women and girls, as per resolution 73/148

The scale and prevalence of domestic violence remain high. According to the data of the Information Technology and Communication Department under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania during the 2019 33,3 thousand people suffered from various kinds of criminal activities, among them 9,3 thousand were victims of domestic violence (10,6 thousand in 2018), or 25,6 percent from the total number of victims of crime. Women constituted 77,1 percent of all victims of domestic violence, ca. 10 percent of all victims of domestic violence were children. The number of people suspected or accused with crimes related to domestic violence in 2019 made ca. 5 thousand (5,6 thousand in 2018). Public opinion survey conducted in 2019 shows that only 14 percent of persons, who suffered from domestic violence indicated that they approached police, 60 percent didn't do so.

According to the police register, the annual number of registered reports of domestic violence is as follows: 18,268 reports in 2012, 21,615 reports in 2013, 29,339 reports in 2014, 38,510 reports in 2015, 50,285 reports in 2016, 47,941 reports in 2017, and 41,531 reports in 2018. According to the integrated system of criminal procedures, the annual number of pre-trial investigations terminated through reconciliation is as follows: 92 pre-trial investigations in 2016, 2,730 pre-trial investigations in 2017, 2,919 pre-trial investigations in 2018, and 1,290 pre-trial investigations during the first half of 2019.

With the aim to protect persons against domestic violence the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 26 of May 2011 adopted **the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence**. The Law defines the concept of domestic violence (Domestic violence shall be an act of violation of human rights and freedoms. **Domestic environment** shall mean the environment comprising the persons currently or previously linked by marriage, partnership, affinity or other close relations, also the persons having a common domicile and a common household. **Victim of domestic violence** (hereinafter referred to as “**victim of violence**”) shall be a person against whom domestic violence has been used, or member of family of the person who died from domestic violence, suffered damage as a consequence of the death of that person, also a child who has become a witness of domestic violence or lives in an environment exposed to violence. Perpetrator of violence shall not be considered victim of violence), establishes the rights and liability of subjects of domestic violence, implementation of prevention measures, provision of assistance in the event of domestic violence and application of protection measures to victims of violence.

In 2013 Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania Linas Linkevičius has signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention. In 2018 Lithuania launched the ratification process of the Convention and accordingly takes measures to bring national legislation in line with the Convention.

The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men prohibits harassment and sexual harassment in education, employment, market, social protection systems, organizations and associations. The same provisions are foreseen in the Law on Equal Opportunities.

Article 26(1) of the Labour Code (hereinafter referred to as the “LC”) establishes the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination on other grounds. This Article implies that in any employer's relationship with employees, direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, instruction to discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, membership of a political party, or in association with religion, belief, faith or convictions, except in the case of religious beliefs, faith or convictions of a person in religious communities, societies or centres where the demand to the employee for a confession of religion, faith or conviction, taking into account the ethos of the religious community, society or centre, is normal, legitimate and justified, on the grounds of the intention to have a child (children), due to circumstances not related to the professional characteristics of employee or other grounds established by law, are prohibited. Article 26(6) of the LC obliges employers having an average number of employees of more than fifty, to adopt and publish, in the normal ways in the workplace, the measures implementing and enforcing the principles of equal opportunities policy.

Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania coordinates the inter-institutional working group, established by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on 15 April 2019, on prevention and protection against violence against women and domestic violence, which main goal is to prepare and submit proposals to the relevant authorities regarding the improvement of legislation on the prevention and reduction of violence against women and domestic violence and the improvement of cooperation between state institutions and non-governmental organizations in these fields. The working group is revising the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence with intention to strengthen the mechanisms of victims protection; to broaden the scope of application of this aforementioned Law so that it would be applicable not only in cases of domestic violence but also when violence occur in public between non-relatives; to establish the definition of gender-based violence against women and to suggest new measures for the National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Provision of Assistance to Victims for 2014–2020 so that it would reflect the issue of gender-based violence against women and girls, as it is gender neutral at the moment.

Recently the draft amendment of the Law on Domestic Violence was prepared and at the moment is announced publically so that the national institutions and NGO's could make comments and suggestions. The draft Law introduces a protection order against violence, defines violence against women, unifies access to assistance in case of violence in private or public life, doctors, teachers and other health and education professionals will have to learn to recognize violence. The draft Law also strengthens the cooperation mechanism between institutions in order to better protect the victim. There's also foreseen to minimize the risk of repeated violence.

The National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Provision of Assistance to Victims for 2014–2020 is being implemented by various national institutions. It is also recommended for municipalities to get involved into implementation of the Action Plan of this Programme. It is foreseen, that the responsible implementers of the measures of the Action Plan of the National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Provision of Assistance to Victims for 2014–2020 after the end of each quarter of the calendar year, shall provide the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania with information on the implementation of the Action Plan by the 15th of the first month of the next quarter.

Action Plans (usually short term - 3 to 4 years) Implementing the National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Provision of Assistance to Victims 2014–2020 are approved by Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour. The plans envisage measures aimed at:

- Organisation of information campaigns on the prevention of domestic violence;
- Support for projects of NGOs and institutions, targeted at the prevention of domestic violence and assistance;
- Improvement in systematisation of statistical data;
- Competence building of specialists working in related fields (NGO's, social workers, police, prosecutors office, medical staff, teachers etc.) through organisation of training;
- Support for organisations working with abusers;
- Funding of telephone help-lines;
- Supervisions, etc.

The implementation of the main part of the activities envisaged in Action plans is coordinated and supervised by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania.

The **Programme of Specialised Assistance Centres** was adopted to ensure the functioning of the network of Specialised Assistance Centres.

The main tool of the provision of assistance for the victims of domestic violence is a network of specialised assistance centres (hereinafter referred to as "SAC"), administered by NGOs. It has been functioning in Lithuania since 2012. This network has been created in implementing the Republic of Lithuania Law on Protection against Domestic Violence. The SACs aim to ensure the provision of specialised complex assistance to victims of violence (help in overcoming the crisis; information and consultation on the type and place of assistance which may be received by the victim of violence; mediation and representation in other institutions; provision of psychological and legal assistance). Specialised assistance centres are administered by NGO's and funded by the state budget. The supervision of the activities of the network of specialised assistance centres lies within the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania. In 2019 the network provided specialised complex assistance for 11Thousand victims of domestic violence (83 percent were women). The victims of domestic violence are referred to SAC by police or they can approach the centre on their own initiative. The daily working routine procedures of SAC are regulated by the **Description of the Activities of Specialized Assistance Centres** is approved by the Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour.

The SACs cooperate with employees of the State Child Rights Protection, Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, municipal bodies, elderships, NGOs engaged in the provision of assistance to victims of violence, establishments and (or) organisations which provide overnight stay, accommodation or other vital services, as well as the other state bodies like police, health care institutions/establishments and authorities responsible for the provision of legal assistance.

In 2019, government, understanding the complexity of the situation and in order to ensure further smooth cooperation and more effective provision of this complex specialised assistance, generously increased the funding to the SACs, from 168,000 EUR in 2012 (when originally this program was started) and 75000 EUR in 2018 to 1,500,000 EUR in 2019.

Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania finances projects of NGO's (non-governmental organisations) working in the area of prevention of domestic violence. Means are allocated from the state budget funds to projects selected by tender.

Emotional assistance for the victims of domestic violence is also provided through telephone help lines functioning 24/7. Activities of the help lines are administered by NGO's and funded by the state budget.

Among the activities of NGO's it is worth to mention an information campaign entitled "16 Days without Violence" (which takes place every year from 25 November to 10 December), aimed at preventing domestic violence. During the campaign society is familiarised with various manifestations of domestic violence, its consequences, legal outcomes and liability. The campaign is aimed at developing intolerance of violent behaviour and informing the general public about the assistance provided to victims of domestic violence. During the information campaign, articles are published in portals and in the press, TV, radio programmes and social advertising are published.

To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, since 2017 Lithuania joins yearly the global awareness initiative "Orange the World" and various buildings and monuments in the capital of Lithuania, including the President's Palace of the Republic of Lithuania, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, also Lithuanian embassies and diplomatic representations around the world are light up in orange.

Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania prepared description of the financing conditions for the implementation of the measure of European Social Fund aimed at combating domestic violence. The NGO "Women information centre" currently is implementing the project "Domestic violence: prevention, protection, cooperation". The aim of the project is to raise awareness of the general public towards the domestic violence, to increase the capacity to recognize the domestic violence, to improve the professional qualification of the providers of assistance, as well as quality and accessibility of the assistance. The activities of the project include public information campaign, special study on quality and accessibility of specialized complex assistance for the victims of domestic violence, special training courses for the teams of providers of assistance, training for the journalists and other activities. The implementation of the project started in 2019 and is planned until 2022. The total budget of the project is ca. 460,000 EURO.

In order to strengthen inter-institutional collaboration with the aim to achieve main goals of Lithuanian Health Strategy for 2014-2025 the Measures and Policy Guidelines on Health Strengthening and Promotion for 2020-2022 has been approved by Minister of Health order No/ V-46 of 13 January 2020. This strategic document consists of number of measures dedicated to stakeholders taking part in public health and health promotion, including violence prevention.

Mental health care services are provided by the primary mental health centres in all municipalities. Mental health services are covered by State Health Insurance Fund.

By the order of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, general practitioners and family doctors should have special knowledge to identify violence and persuade women, especially pregnant women, to recognize that. The special course was introduced to curriculum of medical students.

Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania adopted Guidelines for Responding to Sexual Violence against Women for health care providers. The specialized training on prevention of domestic violence was organised and funded by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. 109 health care specialists (including nurses and doctors) improved their qualification during the

mentioned training. Expansion of teams in primary care is the key for the development of out-patient health care services. In 2019 family physician team was expanded with a nurse assistant, social services worker, life style medicine specialist, physiotherapist and primary dental health care team was supplemented by oral hygienist). This had a significant impact in strengthening integration of primary health care with public health care

In order to improve the accessibility of psychiatric services for children and adolescents, Health Minister's Order No V-752 of 27 June 2019 amending Order No- 730 of 14 December 2000 on the Principles of Organising Psychiatric and Psychotherapeutic Services for Children and Adolescents was adopted. The Order expands the network of medical institutions that will provide day care for children and adolescent psychiatry. Since new policy has entered into force (from 1st of November 2019), child and adolescent psychiatry day care services are available in dozens of hospitals evenly spread throughout Lithuania, which significantly improves access to services. The new policy provides a new psychosocial rehabilitation service for children and adolescents that has not been provided before. It was designed to help patients with mental and behavioural disorders to integrate or reintegrate into the community, school and family, or to enhance the patient's social and self-care skills and adaptation.

Provisions concerning establishment, financial support and activities of specialised assistance centres for victims of domestic violence are underlined the Order on the specialised assistance centres programme. All activities in the frame of the programme are financed from the state budget of the country, municipalities' budget and other financial means received on the legal basis.

School-based programmes to develop life and social skills of children and young people are implemented. The Programme concentrates more on the development of self-confident, and there is some evidence that school-based programmes to prevent violence have shown effectiveness. Technical tools (guidelines, intervention manuals), training programmes are provided for teachers, school administrations. Recognition and avoidance of sexual, physical, psychological abuse and maltreatment is part of the national curricular (particular: 'The General Programme of Health, Sexuality and Family Planning'.

In 2019, additionally, EUR 2.5 million from State Budget was allocated to mental health needs on local level: school community capacity building for public mental health and mental health competence for corporate employees, addiction consultants and early intervention programs;

In 2019 the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania adopted new training program on violence prevention for public health specialists working in school setting and organize training for specialists.

State Public Health Strengthening Fund (hereinafter referred to as "the Fund") is established by the Law on Health System of the Republic of Lithuania (Article No 381) and by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No 1197 "Regarding the Approval of the Statute of State Public Health Strengthening Fund and the Composition of State Public Health Strengthening Fund". The Fund is administered by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania and supports health promotion and healthy well-being activities, prevention projects, social advertising and scientific research seeking to improve the awareness of society and to ensure the necessary information exchange on important public health issues including violence prevention, suicide prevention, drug harm prevention, etc. The Government of the Republic of Lithuania annually allocates for the Fund a fixed percentage of the excise duty from the sale of alcoholic beverages and

manufactured tobacco and from revenues received from lottery and gambling tax. In 2020 the State Public Health Strengthening Fund exceeded EUR 3 million.

2014-2021 European Economic Area Financial Mechanism programme agreement for the Programme „Health“ was signed on 3rd of September, 2019. Ministry of Health as a Programme partner, actively contribute to the implementation of Programme measures: Implementation of Adopted and Extended Youth-Friendly Health Care Service (YFHCS) Provision Model; Health Offices in Pre-schools and Schools Equipped with Methodological Tools; Consulting services for people experiencing emotional difficulties (Well-being advisors); Development and Implementation of Home Visitation Early Intervention Model; Adaptation and Implementation of the “Incredible Years” Program in Lithuania. Allocated funds for the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania: EUR 9.211 million.

Provisions concerning establishment, financial support and activities of specialised assistance centres for victims of domestic violence are underlined the Order on the specialised assistance centres programme. All activities in the frame of the programme are financed from the state budget of the country, municipalities’ budget, financial means of the EU structural funds and other financial means received on the legal basis. Specialised assistance centres for victims of domestic violence are supported by the state. Expenses include not only direct support for the victim, but also maintenance of the building, salaries for social workers, psychologists and other staff.

Lithuania has prepared and implemented special programme in the health sector to improve the quality and accessibility of health care services for pregnant and delivering women and neonates in Lithuania. Programme implementation period: 2012–2017 with Swiss financial support. From 2013 to February 2017, 27 Lithuanian hospitals providing perinatal and neonatal health care services were supplied with modern medical equipment necessary for providing quality services. The hospitals received a total of 108 different items of medical equipment for more than EUR 21.4 million. A total of 72 diagnostic and treatment guidelines in obstetrics and neonatology developed by a large team of specialists will allow for the standardisation of the diagnostics and treatment of the most relevant pathologies in these spheres and will give an opportunity for pregnant and delivering women and neonates to receive health care services of a better quality. The developed guidelines are unique in that, for the first time in Lithuania, they include a detailed description of processes and interventions rather than just a list, a list of audit indicators, an implementation scheme for health care establishments, and information for female patients

The reimbursement of subsidized pharmaceutical (Levonorgestrel) (Z97.5) for young woman ages 15-20, was introduced in 2020.

Impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in regards to violence against women and girls and measures undertaken to address those in the short, medium and long-term

Inter-institutional Action Plan on the Prevention of Domestic Violence during the Quarantine regarding COVID-19 was adopted on April 2020, where various measures are foreseen for the period of quarantine. In each case, upon notification of domestic violence, the incident of violence is responded immediately, and when the decision to initiate an incident investigation is taken, a specialised assistance centre, providing assistance to victims of domestic violence, is immediately notified by an e-mail.

In order to best protect the rights and legitimate interests of victims of violence, the police actively co-operate with the Lithuanian Women's Rights Association, which unites specialised assistance centres, and takes additional actions.

People who may be victims of domestic violence or who are concerned that their relatives may be affected by domestic violence are informed of the contact details of the specialised assistance centres in their place of residence by calling the police information line.

Police officers also liaise with people living in remote rural areas who have previously been victims of domestic violence, provide them with information on protective measures, and provide advice on other issues within the area of competence of the police.

Information regarding recognition of domestic violence and preventive measures is published on the websites of various ministries, police institutions and on the accounts of the social network of police community officials. Information related to the issues of ensuring the rights of victims of domestic violence is also shared with the Lithuanian Women's Rights Enforcement Association, which publishes it on its [website \(https://www.specializuotospagalboscentras.lt/\)](https://www.specializuotospagalboscentras.lt/) as needed.

In case of danger, people can call the police officers on the emergency number 112. If the perpetrator is nearby and it is not possible to call 112, there's a possibility to send an SMS to 112. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania funds the activities of emotional support services provided by phone. During a pandemic and quarantine, the Lithuanian Emotional Support Services – Youth Line, Hope Line, Women's Helpline, Children's Line and Dover Line – encourage adults and children to share their feelings and seek free help by phone and online provided by on-call volunteer consultants. Emotional help lines are on call during a pandemic and are waiting for adults and children. Telephone and online counselling volunteers are ready to help people to cope with the stress and challenges of the time, to look for alternatives, and, if necessary, to direct people to further help, thus ensuring their safety and consistency in surviving the crisis. At this critical time, the risk of suicide may increase, so both adults and children are invited to share their experiences with emotional support lines and receive the help they need.

The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania has prepared a draft law amending Articles 42 and 67 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania and supplementing the Code with Article 72⁴ and a draft law amending Articles 342 and 357 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Lithuania. The aim of these amendments – to impose a time-framed obligation to notify a change of residence for perpetrators of sexual offenses against minors. Currently, draft laws are being discussed in the committees of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania.

The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, drafted a new version of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Domestic Violence. Purpose of this law – to protect every person from domestic violence, protect from violence against women, to take preventive measures, to take protective measures and to provide appropriate assistance to victims of domestic violence and / or violence against women. Due to the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, new measure of the emergency barring order in case of domestic violence have been included in the law. The draft of the Law is currently being coordinated with the authorities concerned.

In 2019, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania allocated funds to update its website www.bukstipri.lt, which is dedicated to publishing relevant information and statistics for the victims of domestic violence. The design of the website has been updated to make it more attractive, to

ensure simple, comprehensible and easy navigation, functionality of the structure. A content management system has also been set up to ensure simple administration of the site and promptly provide visitors with relevant information.

Minister of the Interior by order no. 1V-345 of 10 April 2020 approved a plan of measures for the prevention of domestic violence during the quarantine period for COVID-19. The plan includes additional measures to provide assistance to victims of domestic violence during the quarantine period, a better response to cases of domestic violence, the possibility to call for help via SMS to the emergency number 112, and measures to publicize additional information on how to obtain assistance. Contributing to the prevention of domestic violence, measures foreseen in the Police Action Plan for Ensuring the Security of the Population in Rural Areas adopted by the Police Commissioner General of 8 of April 2020 are being implemented. Municipalities were recommended to cooperate with specialized help centres and, if possible, to allocate part of the isolation places provided by municipalities to victims of domestic violence.

Upon announcing of the tertiary (absolute preparedness) level of the civil protection system on 14 March 2020 by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, police was supposed to evaluate the present and the foreseen situation, to change procedures for work organisation, mobilise available resources and estimate reserve capacity in case of the infection spread both among inhabitants and within the institution. Having evaluated foreign experience, internal and external risks and taking into consideration the imposed quarantine restrictions, police has identified, already at the very beginning of the pandemic, the largest threats to the public security and is conducting continuous monitoring of changes in crime situation and analysing crime-related processes in priority areas.

One of the threats is strict requirements for isolation and self-isolation as well as increased tension between family members, which trigger increased anger, rows and violence; therefore, cases of domestic violence, murders or attempted murders, serious health impairments, threats to murder or to cause serious health impairments may grow. In order to manage these threats and ensure the safety of women who are likely to become victims of violence, the following measures have been taken:

1. The public was informed of the identified threats, police has provided recommendations and advice as to how to avoid the danger and not to become a victim of crime;
2. The algorithm for responding to domestic violence-related reports has been developed in order to ensure the appropriate response, so that all cases of violence are identified, relevant forces are sent to a place of incident and victims receive the necessary aid;
3. Due to a greater risk for inhabitants of isolated settlements to become victims of criminal offences, including victims of cases of violence, with a view to ensure the security of inhabitants of rural areas, the Police Agency Action Plan has been prepared (**approved by the Police Commissioner General of the Republic of Lithuania, No. 5-IL-5455, dated 09/04/2020**). It defines measures intended to ensure the security of individuals exposed to high risk of becoming victims of crime, by contacting the individuals who were victims of domestic violence in the past and visiting individuals in self-isolation.

All primary mental health care centres provided services in remote form, and two-thirds also provided anonymous telephone consultations by professional psychologists during the quarantine. A 24/7 hotline for emotional support for those suffering from anxiety and other mental difficulties during the pandemic was established, as well as a national internet platform pagalbasau.lt as a one-point source of reliable information and about mental health during COVID-19 and beyond.